

My name is Theresa Barnett from Southington. I am outraged at what has happened in our own backyard in Newtown. We had the all warning signs of things to come dating back to even the McDonald's massacre in San Diego in 1984 and many many more in the nearly 30 years since then that are now just all too familiar to us. We have been shocked at the time of the massacres and then we are silent... This time we can no longer be silent. It is time for things to change.

I am a mother of two college aged daughters. My daughters need to be able to walk safely to classes on their campuses. They need to be able to go to movie theaters, shopping malls, and places of worship. It seems like just yesterday my daughters were first graders. They and all of us have the right to live without the fear of gun violence that is insidiously increasingly part of our society now. We cannot continue to allow this to happen to our way of life.

This past weekend, I had the distinct honor of traveling with the families of Newtown to Washington DC to march for a change on gun control. It was important for me to go because I like many of us have witnessed too many of these tragedies in our country at the hands of the mentally ill in combination with automatic assault rifles. As a nurse practitioner and primary care provider, I know only too well the constraints put on the health care system to provide for adequate mental health care. Because of spending cuts, adequate and timely referrals is often a frequent challenge. The NRA supposed "meaningful contributions" to our problem is short sighted and they clearly have no idea what they are talking about when it comes to mental illness. They also have no idea of what it would really mean to arm our schools with guns or what the implications really would be on public safety since they pressured Congress to defund studying gun violence by the CDC 17 years ago!

The NRA solution of developing lists of those with mental health problems could never be properly executed. For one thing, where would you ever decide to draw the line on the whose illness is reportable vs. who is not??? Does someone ever get well enough to be off the list??? I can envision no more devastating problem to trying to address mental health care than to expose the vulnerable in this way. The patients and families of those who need the help the most would be driven from seeking that care. It is analogous to those in the 1980s with HIV and the call to "list" them... Certainly we are better than this... Our civilized society needs real solutions to this very real problem of gun violence run amuck. The time to address this is NOW since it will still take many, many years even decades to clean up our streets of assault guns that are out there at the present time.

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